

S E R M O N,

Preached at *2 Dupl 7* *3.d* *T. 261. [7]*
WESLEYS, July 29th, 1789,

BEFORE THE

METHODIST PREACHERS,

(ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE.)

AND

A LARGE BODY OF THE PEOPLE IN CONNECTION
WITH THEM:

• AND NOW PUBLISHED

AT THE REQUEST OF MANY OF THE HEARERS.

By JAMES HAMILTON, M. D.

Fellow of the Royal College of PHYSICIANS of Edinburgh.

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour
out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and on my servants, and on my
handmaids I will pour out of my Spirit: and they shall prophesy.*

Acts ii. 17. 18.

L O N D O N:

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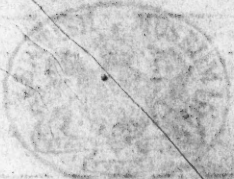
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R E A D E R.

THE following Discourse will recommend itself to all impartial persons. It contains deep and weighty Truths, particularly needful to be considered at this time; especially by the People called Methodists, that they may fully understand, and thankfully improve the invaluable Privileges which they enjoy.

JOHN WESLEY.

LONDON, CITY-ROAD,

Feb. 28th, 1790.

THE following Remarks will be
read to all unrepentant persons
in certain cases and against those who
are usually expected to be constant in this
time; especially by the people called Me-
thodists, that they may fully understand
and thankfully improve the inward work
allege who they enjoy.

JOHN WESLEY

S E R M O N, &c.

TRUST YE NOT IN LYING WORDS, SAYING, THE
TEMPLE OF THE LORD, THE TEMPLE OF THE
LORD, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, ARE THESE.

Jerem. vii. 4.

THESE words of the Prophet have been much upon my mind, and I have often wished for an opportunity to speak to you from them. And, seeing that God hath now given it me, I intreat your patience and attention, and above all the prayer of faith, that Divine Wisdom may enable me to speak forth the words of truth and soberness: and that God may accompany the word, when spoken, with holy unction, and make it effectual to our instruction and comfort.

The following considerations offer themselves to our thoughts, from the words of the text.

I. The character of the people to whom the message was sent:

II. The character of the messenger: and,

Lastly,

[8]

Lastly, The nature and design of the message.

When we have spoken a little to each of these particulars, let us draw such conclusions from them, as may be of use to ourselves.

The first thing to be considered, is the character of the people, to whom the message was sent. They were the progeny of Abraham, that holy man, who had the high appellation of being the Friend of God: and they were chosen and set apart from the rest of mankind, for many glorious and important purposes.

While gross darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people; while the bulk of mankind were sunk in idolatry and spiritual death; it pleased the Supreme Being, the Great Governor of the Universe, in sovereign free mercy to bestow upon the Jews the true light, to grant them the revelation of his will, the knowledge of himself, and what he required of them. He became their God and their King; pointed out that way in which he chose to be worshipped; and in the religion which he taught them, there were numerous rites, ceremonies, and emblematical representations; but all tending to this one purpose, that receiving them by faith, as shadows of good things to come, they might be delivered from the state of misery, which all men are in by reason of sin; this faith bringing them to the spiritual knowledge of themselves, and of God as their Saviour and Redeemer: so that being saved from sin, and restored to the divine image, they might all, and every one, become the spiritual sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Nor was it the intention of God that these great and glorious blessings should be confined to them alone.

alone. No, by no means. It was his will, that all the children of Adam should partake of them. And he only made the Jews, as it were, the center; that from them the Heavenly Light might beam forth, and irradiate the earth to its utmost circumference.

And to accomplish this beneficent purpose, he placed them in that part of the world, by much the best calculated for producing this glorious end. For, the land of Canaan, at that time the residence of the Jews, is situated in the midst of the then known world. It is in the borders of Asia, adjoining to Africa, and very near to the confines of Europe; the only three parts of our globe then discovered. They were also next neighbours to, and had continual intercourse with the Phœnicians, those great merchants, whose ships, in their wide-extended commerce, might carry the knowledge of God over this our western world: while the vast trade that the Jews themselves carried on, down the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulph into India, spread the same divine knowledge through the east. At the same time their continual intercourse with Egypt and Ethiopia, diffused the heavenly light through the south. And by means of their frequent dispersions into Asia, illumined the dark regions of the north. So that all flesh might see the glory of God, and partake of the salvation of our Lord.

The Jews then had the written law of the Lord, and they had their priests and scribes, as stated preachers, to expound and enforce the keeping of that law. But, as all external religion is of no use, any farther than as it advances the spiritual kingdom of Christ in the soul: and as the Jews too often lost sight of this, resting in their types
and

and ceremonies, while their hearts remained unsanctified and impure; when this was the case, the Deity took a different method of dealing with them. He called a race of men, named Prophets, who had nothing to do with the priesthood: men full of the Holy Ghost: men taken from the common trades and occupations that were in the land; witness Elisha from his yoke of oxen, David from his sheep, and Amos from his farm, and so of the others. For I do not find, after all the enquiry I can make, that there were more than two or three of the prophets, who were also priests. And he sent these men, whose characters we are now to consider, to declare unto the Jews, that all external religion is nothing worth, when it fails to produce purity in the heart.

The prophets then were what we call Lay-men, and taken from among the common occupations in Judea, chiefly farmers and shepherds. Some indeed were of the royal family. They were holy men, men of strong faith, full of the Holy Ghost, and their hearts overflowing with zeal for the honour of God. Men of invincible courage, delivering their message to the ruler and the ruled, without fear or dread, their souls being full of love and compassion for their brethren. As their treasures were in heaven, so were their hearts; being raised above the world, they neither feared nor loved aught that was in it, except in the order of God. They practised the strictest temperance, and were cloathed in the plainest manner.

Of these holy men was the person, from whose prophecy the text is taken. He was called to this important work in his younger years, and elected to it from his very birth. When commissioned as a preacher by his Maker, he was told that the kings
of

of Judea, the princes thereof, the priests thereof, and all the people of the land should be against him. Here is one obscure young man against the whole world! But relying by faith on the promise of that great and good God, who had chosen and called him, and who had said he would make him as a brazen wall to stop the abounding iniquities of his people; he boldly went up to the gate of the temple, probably at one of the three great feasts, when all the people were assembled together, and stretching out his arm towards that holy house, he cried aloud, "Trust not to lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

He repeats the message three times, alluding to the three different courts for worship, the outer, the inner, and the most holy of all. What but the over-ruling power of God kept those Jerusalem bigots from stopping their ears, rushing upon him with one accord, as they did upon Stephen, a prophet of the New Testament, drag him out of their city, and with all the rage of frantic bigotry, dash out his brains? But the bridle of the Lord was in their jaws; and without his permission, one hair of the prophet's head must not fall to the ground.

Come we now then to consider the nature and design of the message.

The Jewish œconomy, as already observed, was all appointed by the Deity himself. Their temple was built under his direction; it had been filled with his glory; and the ritual was prescribed by him. But notwithstanding all this, when the people rested in outward things; when *saying of prayers* was substituted in the place of spiritual prayer—When the types of the great sacrifice,

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which

which was to be offered up, were relied on as having virtue in themselves, and the great atonement overlooked or forgotten—When the love of God and man was put off, and pride, formality, and self-love were taken up, God arises in anger. He commissions his servant to declare, that all he had commanded them to do, when thus abused, was no better than lying words.

This indeed is the universal language of all his prophets. Thus speaketh the prophet Isaiah, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and of the fat of fed beasts. And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me. The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. Wash ye, make ye clean! Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well." Or, according to the words of Jeremiah, "Amend your ways and your doings! For, if ye truly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and shed not innocent blood; neither walk after other gods to your hurt. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever. Will ye trust in lying words that cannot profit? Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery? Swear falsely, walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in
" this

"this house which is called by my name? Is this
"house, which is called by my name, become a
"den of robbers? Behold I, even I have seen it,
"saith the Lord."

"Will the Lord" saith the prophet Micah, "be
"pleased with thousands of rams; or with ten
"thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-
"born for my transgression; the fruit of my body
"for the sin of my soul? No! He hath shewed
"thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the
"Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love
"mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Having spoken a little to each of the particu-
lars proposed, let us draw such conclusions from
them as may be profitable to ourselves.

How plain is it from what has been said, that
all external acts of religion, considered simply in
themselves, are of no avail, of no worth in the
eyes of a holy God! And so far indeed from be-
ing so, that when rested in as the means of accept-
ance with him, are abominable in his sight, can-
not bring life, only increase death, and insure dam-
nation.

And was this the case under the dispensation of
the Jews, whose outward worship was minutely
regulated and appointed by God himself? Then
of how much less value, under the Christian dispen-
sation, must all external acts and ceremonies prove,
seeing God has declared, that the times of ig-
norance and of childhood are now past, and that
they who worship him, must worship him in spi-
rit and in truth?

He is indeed a Holy Being, just and good, per-
fect in all his attributes. His eyes are as a flame
of fire. To him the secrets of all hearts are known.
The darkness is to him as the noon-day, and from
him

him nothing can be hid; nor can he look upon iniquity but with abhorrence. And shall the pure, the holy God, whose we are, be put off with words, and a few unmeaning gestures; while our souls, which he only delighteth to possess, are the seats of uncleanness, covetousness, pride, envy, hatred, anger, discontent, and other hellish passions? No, the word of the Lord is, "Bring no more vain oblations!" Unhallowed fountains can only pour forth unhallowed streams. Would ye be acceptable worshippers, then put pride far from you in every shape, and humble yourselves to the dust. Fly to the Lord! To Jesus the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! The Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. Call upon him, and he will hear. Seek, ask, knock, and the door of mercy will be opened unto you. For he hath promised it, and he is the Truth itself, and cannot lye. Lay your desperate case before him. Beseech him to open your eyes that ye may see. And as no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him; cry, beg, intreat him to give you the knowledge of the Father in his perfections, and in his law: to cause you to perceive, to feel in your inmost souls, that he is holy, that he is just to punish: that the divine law is spiritual, perfect, spotless, pure, inexorable; and that it threatens vengeance to all the transgressors of it. And be it ever remembered, that this law is guarded by all the omnipotence of God. O the folly, the more than Egyptian darkness of such, as expect salvation through the deeds of the law! Did Adam, when possessed of a pure and a perfect spirit, break this law? And can we, who by nature are full of all evil, obtain heaven by the works of it? Can we, imperfect, unholy, fallen
mid spirits,

spirits; fulfil this law? This law, which reaches to the very thoughts, and is a picture of the divine will? It is madness to suppose it. O ye formalists! how can ye escape the damnation of hell? It cannot be! Thieves, publicans, and harlots, who repent, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.

But if ye have received the knowledge of the Father, in his justice, holiness, and truth; if ye are trembling under a sense of your danger and spiritual death; if ye feel that ye cannot atone for your transgressions, or change your impure, unhallowed hearts; then are ye a people ready prepared for the knowledge of his Son. Come then, and look to Jesus, the Saviour of a lost world. See! He is love itself, and love to you. Hark, hear his heavenly voice! All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven the sons of men; and whosoever will, may take of the water of life, and live for ever. His arms, which comprehend universal nature, are stretched out to embrace you. O run then into them, and be safe. Believe his word, his oath, sealed with his blood! Receive him by faith, and enjoy the salvation, the full, free, perfect salvation of God.

Mark the pains that God is at to call the attention of all men from external religion to that which is spiritual and divine. While sects, parties, and their creeds, divide and destroy immortal souls; the Lord, in mercy to us, and to the world, has returned to his ancient prophetic and apostolic dispensations. Again has he called a race of spiritual men; men taken, as formerly, from the trades and common occupations of our land, shepherds and farmers, fishermen and tent-makers. He has fitted these men for the work;
filled

filled them with divine light, life, and love; and has sent them forth, to call all men off from trusting in external worship, to the possession of internal holiness. Yes, my brethren, these are the men; the prophets, the apostles of the Lord! They are before us; and they are raised up for this express purpose, to collect into *one spiritual church* all the children of God. Not to bring them over to an opinion; not to separate them from their own churches, and way of worship; but to erect, by the grace of God, the kingdom of Christ in their hearts. That being born of God, and filled with divine love; renewed and sanctified in body, soul, and spirit; Arminians and Calvinists, Quakers and Churchmen, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Independents; all of every sect may partake of one spirit, become one in heart, be bound up in *one bundle of life*, by the cords of love, however they may differ and dissent in things that are external.

And true it is, my brethren, that in raising up these spiritual preachers, to bring to effect this glorious work, it pleased God, in free sovereign wisdom, to elect, call, and make use of a priest* of the church of England; that as a second Samuel, under God, he might be unto us a father, a ruler, and a guide. It pleased the Lord also, through him, to call two other priests of the same church: the first † he endowed with the divine spirit of sacred harmony, that he might bestow upon us, through him, the most sublime, the most exalted, the most poetic hymns, that the world has ever heard since the days of the son of Jesse: while the third ‡, to whom he gave a voice like a trumpet, should proclaim the glad year of spiritual

* Mr. John Wesley. † Mr. Charles Wesley. ‡ Mr. Whitfield.

Jubilee; and found a word of reconciliation to a fallen world.

And although these men were strict members of the established church; yet the providence of God permitted the doors of the church to be shut against them, and forced them to become itinerant apostles. And here mark the divine wisdom, that although their brother priests in the church did thus thrust them from them; and although their names were cast out as evil above the names of all men; they ever retained a strong and affectionate attachment to the men who had thus abused them, and to the church of which they were members. And this wonderful attachment has been, in the overruling hand of God, the great mean of carrying on that glorious spiritual work which we now see. It has kept us in the order of God, in which we have been called. And it appears to me, that had it not been for this attachment, the Methodists would have long ere this become a distinct body, separate from the church and all others; and I fear, in consequence thereof, sunk into the dead formality of the numerous sects, with which the world is harrassed and divided.

And seeing that the two younger of those holy men are now tuning their harps in the paradise of God; receiving the recompense of their reward, their works having followed them; let us, my brethren, render all due honour to the survivor, our aged father, and to all these his sons in the gospel; that while they impart to us the good things of God; while they watch over our souls, as those that must give a strict account to their maker, of the flocks committed to their trust; let us cheerfully and joyfully hold up their hands, by following them as they follow their Lord: let

us administer to them of our temporal things: let us be kind to them: let us love them as our fathers and brethren: so shall we receive a great reward from the Lord: for he hath said, that *whosoever hath given even a cup of cold water to a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall in no wise lose his reward: neither is he unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, in that ye have ministered unto his saints, and yet do minister.*

Will ye hear with me, ye spiritual messengers of the Lord, while I presume to say a few words to you? See then with what a holy calling ye are called: for what a glorious and important end God has raised you up! Even to set spiritual religion before the eyes of all men: to cry to every one, to men of all opinions, sects, and parties, trust not unto lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord are these! To collect into one spiritual church, such as will hearken to the voice of God through you. To bring them from resting in external duties, to the possession of internal holiness: from an opinion in the head, to the love of God, through Christ, in the heart: from a form of worship, to become the true worshippers of our Lord: the Redeemed of the Holy One, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty!

Let then the dead bury the dead! let the Formalist and the Pharisee, the Church-bigot, and the Sectary contend for ways of thinking, gestures in worship, and modes of church government; but may ye never forget, that ye are sent for a nobler end: that your commission is that of Paul's, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: To bring all, of all opinions, to be the disciples of our God: the members of his Son's kingdom. Be zealous then for the Lord of Hosts! May the Gospel
of

to, the Prince
all possible! it cannot be
names are on the palms of his hands: ye
are as a signet on his arm: all the conjoined pow-
ers of earth and hell cannot hurt you: neither shall
ye ever lack any manner of thing that is good. As
the witnesses of and for truth, witness then a good
confession, and thereby turn many to righteousness,
that ye may shine as the stars for ever and ever.

Endure all things! Consider the apostle of your
profession, who *for the joy that was set before him,*
suffered the contradiction of sinners against himself; en-
dured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down
at the right hand of the throne of God. As his fol-
lowers, remember ye are the salt of the earth, raised
up by him, as the means to prevent and to cure
the corruption that abounds in it: to season the
minds of men with heavenly wisdom and grace.

But miserable above all men ye, if instead of
preventing or removing the contagion of sin, ye
yourselves are found sinners, or even useles, insipid,
and slothful: ye are thenceforth good for nothing,
but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.
For surely he who undertakes to reprove the world,
must be one whom the world cannot justly reprove:
his actions, his words, his dress, his very gestures
and looks will be observed and strictly canvassed by
sharp-sighted enemies: It therefore behoves you,

Jun: wherefore
henceforth know we
Be faithful unto death: remain in the power of God
in which ye are called: think no more of separation
from others in external things; but rather
come all things to all men, with a good conscience,
if by any means ye may gain some.

And although I am neither a prophet, nor the son
of a prophet; yet forgive me when I express my
fears, that if ever the Methodists leave their several
churches; set up as a separate people by external
distinctions and creeds; if ye substitute a silken
gown and sash, instead of rough garments and a leather
girdle, and call one another Rabbi! Rabbi!
then the glory will depart from you, and God will
raise up another people. He will call other lay-
preachers, no matter by what name, and he will
send them to call *you* from opinions and forms:
they will sound in *your* ears, "Trust not unto lying
words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple
of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."
But God forbid this should ever happen! O Lord
keep these thy servants pure and holy! Is not this
the leaven that shall leaven the whole earth? Even
so, come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

DUNBAR, January 1, 1790.

all come and see my glory
Isaiah 60

FATHER of boundless grace,
Thou hast in part fulfill'd
Thy promise made to *Adam's* race,
In GOD incarnate seal'd:
A few from every land
At first to *Salem* came,
And saw the wonders of thy hand,
And saw the tongues of flame!

From thence thy heralds ran
To earth's remotest bound,
And made thy glorious mercy known,
And spread the joyful sound:
They call'd the listening throng
To know their sins forgiven,
And brought them in, from every tongue
And nation under heaven.

Again

sun: wherefo
To God reviving news: er of Go
Them snatch'd out of the flame
Thro' every nation send
The true *Messias* to proclaim
The universal Friend;
That all the God unknown
May learn of them to adore,
And see thy glory in thy Son
'Till time shall be no more.

F I N I S.